



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 21, 2013**

By: Maj. Randall Stillinger

**Alaska Soldiers navigate from desert to sea**

**CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait**— As winter appears on the horizon and snow begins to fall across Alaska, the blowing sands of the Kuwaiti desert continue to challenge some of its Army Aviators.

Since April, Alpha Company, 1 Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, has endured harsh conditions that few Alaskans will ever experience with daily high temperatures exceeding 100 degrees for five months straight with many days exceeding 120 degrees.

These Guardsmen and their UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters are deployed with the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Their mission is to provide security to the region and build partnerships with countries that will further long-term stability in and around the Arabian Gulf.

Alpha Company has a front row seat for what may be the future of Army aviation operations in the post-Iraq/Afghanistan era as they venture out over the water. Once used as a stepping stone for units headed north into Iraq, Camp Buehring is their home base for operations and training missions across the region.

A significant key to regional security is the free flow of maritime traffic in the Arabian Gulf. Of particular importance is the Strait of Hormuz between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, which is crucial to the export of oil to the world market. Working over the water and embarking on U.S. Navy ships is a new skill for most Army aviators, but the Alaska Soldiers have risen to the challenge.

Maritime missions for Black Hawk helicopters include Combat Search and Rescue, Medical Evacuation and the transfer of personnel and logistics support to U.S. Navy ships in the area. These overwater missions require Army aviators to add challenging tasks and extensive knowledge to an already long list of training requirements.

Capt. Nathan Cornilles, company commander for the unit, said, "I think the shipboard

missions that we've been able to participate in is probably one of the most exciting things we've been able to do as part of our Army mission here. It's extremely challenging."

Cornilles, of Eagle River, Alaska, is proud of his unit's ability to adapt to the changing missions before them.

"We can operate in almost any environment. We're familiar with overwater operations, cold weather operations, dust landings, snow landings," Cornilles said. "I think we've got a really diverse group of Soldiers that can answer any mission that's asked of them."

The Alaska Soldiers are also working with the Kuwaiti Air Force and other multi-national partners in the region to strengthen cohesiveness, execute joint-training events, and learn best practices from each other to provide long-term stability.

The 1-189th General Support Aviation Battalion from Montana serves as the company's higher headquarters for this deployment. Lt. Col. Jamie Wilkins, who serves as the battalion's commander, said that the Alaska Guard team has done an exceptional job during the deployment.

"The Alaska team pulled together and as a unit contributed to the overall success of the battalion and the 36th CAB," Wilkins said.

Capt. Cornilles is always mindful of all the people at home in Alaska that continue to support his Soldiers.

"I just want to thank our families for all the support that they've given us while we've been over here," Cornilles said. "Every single Soldier has benefitted from that consistent contact with the families and their support. Without them this mission wouldn't be possible."

The company will return to their home base at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson this winter.

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#### **Cutlines:**

**1036664**

**130530-A-AY590-386**

Soldiers of Alpha Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment from the Alaska Army National Guard at Udairi Army Airfield in Kuwait. The company is currently deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)

**1036666**

**062113-A-AY590-044**

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from Alpha Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, land on the flight deck of the USS Ponce AFSB(I)15 during training operations in the Persian Gulf. The company is currently deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)

**1036667**

100313-A-AY590-003

Spc. Paul Gilquist, a crew chief with Alpha Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, conducts maintenance on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Camp Buehring in Kuwait. The company is currently deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)

**1036669**

**130811-A-AY590-031**

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Alpha Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, crosses the Kuwait coastline into the Persian Gulf during training operations. The company is currently deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)